

VZCZCXRO9649
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHAM #0543/01 0371606
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 061606Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6817
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000543

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: NEW CENTRIST PARTY TO COUNTER ISLAMISTS

REF: A. AMMAN 5945

[1](#)B. TDX 315/09006-07

AMMAN 00000543 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Establishment politicians are planning a new party to counter the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in 2007's elections. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Chamber of Deputies speaker Abdel Hadi al Majali told Ambassador January 31 that he was organizing with other establishment politicians to oppose the Islamic Action Front in the municipal and parliamentary elections expected later this year. Majali (an East Banker whom many Palestinian-Jordanians perceive as anti-Palestinian) told Ambassador that the new party would have to represent all Jordanians - East Bankers, Jordanians of Palestinian origin, Christians, Muslims, and Circassians. He estimated that 40 per cent of the population did not participate in the political process. This "silent majority," as he described it, was mostly secular and could be mobilized to counter the IAF and create a "nationalist" party. Majali hoped the new party (still unnamed) would dominate a three-party system that would also include the Islamists and a liberal left faction.

Who is signed on?

[1](#)3. (C) Majali claimed 60 pro-government members of Parliament were ready to sign on to the initiative. (Note: Majali leads a bloc of 27 MPs, most of whom will likely support the new party. 25-35 MPs from several other blocs would likely follow suit. Most MPs currently have no party affiliation, aside from the 15 IAF MPs. End note.) In addition, he planned to discuss the new party with the Secretaries General of 14 centrist and nationalist parties on

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February 2 to solicit their participation. (Note: None of these other parties have representatives in Parliament and are minor political factors at best. Several of them are the shells of previous, failed attempts to create pro-government political movements. End note.)

[1](#)4. (C) Majali told Ambassador that the King supported the development of a new party, saying they had discussed the idea together with other political leaders. Members of Majali's parliamentary bloc separately told poloff that Majali, former Prime Minister Taher al Masri, current MP and bloc leader Abdulrauf al Rawabdeh, and MP and bloc leader Nayef al Fayyez, among others, were involved in the new party.

[1](#)5. (C) In a separate meeting with the Ambassador, Taher al

Masri confirmed his involvement with the new party. He said the King is generally supportive of the concept, leaving it up to the organizers to make it a reality. Masri considered big changes to the political landscape as unlikely, and noted that the new party risked being perceived as a government directed effort and if so, would lack credibility. (Note: Majali's statements hinted at and Masri stated directly that a key question remains as to how much the palace and security services will publicly embrace the new party. While the party would suffer if perceived as government-sponsored, potential candidates, members and supporters will also want assurance that they will not be penalized for joining. End note.)

National Planning Conference Upcoming

¶6. (C) Majali said that within four weeks, he would organize a national conference attended by the 60 MPs, members of the 14 parties (he hoped), and up to 2000 political personalities including ex-ministers, economists, union leaders and women's association members among others. He predicted the conference attendees would declare four main principles (consistent with the "We are all Jordan" convention in July 2006) ref A) and then would select a committee to draft bylaws, legally register the party and begin opening offices throughout the country.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Most Jordanians will view a new pro-government party along the lines sketched out by Majali as largely a creature of the security services. The General Intelligence Directorate will no doubt be generous in its contributions to the new party. Nevertheless, if the new grouping can provide a unified vehicle for those Jordanian voters who prefer their politics secular, it will be a positive development. The party's first challenge will be convincing potential activists from the Palestinian-Jordanian community that a Majali-led organization can credibly represent their interests) a very tall order. Its next hurdle, as an establishment organization, will be finding a

AMMAN 00000543 002.2 OF 002

way to appeal to a street that is ashamed of the GOJ's alignment with U.S. policies in the region, and views with suspicion the country's westernized elite.

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